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CHAOS

"At intervals strange shapes in myriads."

CHAOS

A VISION OF ETERNITY

BY

ALTAIR

ILLUSTRATED BY

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From designs by the author

"It is an open secret to the few who know it
but a mystery and a stumbling block to the
many that Science and Poetry are own sisters."

Sir FREDERICK POLLOCK

NEW YORK
DOUGLAS C. McMURTRIE
1919

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DEDICATED TO THOSE
"WHO THEMSELVES IN SOME
MEASURE ALSO SEE VISIONS
AND DREAM DREAMS."

RUSKIN

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PREFACE

Should any optimist feel disposed to object to the doleful picture of man's character, life and destiny depicted in this drama, let it be remembered that it is—all a dream. Yet, dreams come true! Since this work was written a great war has devastated Europe and embroiled the entire world. In the midst of universal culture, when mankind was serenely contemplating an age of peace and enlightened development, the great storm broke. The barbarities of primitive ages were duplicated, and, even surpassed. Rapine and torture; the taking and killing of hostages; the bombardment and destruction of unfortified places and the ruthless murder of non-combatants—all of these brutalities were unexpectedly revived; to the horror and amazement of a startled world.

In the wake of all this came other ills hardly less discreditable to human nature: While the true men of the world were fighting the battles of civilization, other men, debased and sordid, preaching patriotism in the meantime at a safe distance from the zone of danger, were insidiously profiteering in all the necessities of life; turning the sacrifice of their brothers-in-arms to their own selfish advantage. And now, with the war over, the evil still continues. Even religious intolerance, suspended for a time, has reawakened and, while its blinded votaries are struggling for tactical

advantage, Paganism runs rampant with poisonous fangs aimed at the heart of all religion. Races, too, are stirred again to selfish rivalries. Imperialism, for the destruction of which the war was fought, still lurks in unexpected places and diplomats are still striving to solve international problems by the methods of Machiavelli. In short, we are wearing the habiliments of civilization; but our culture is largely cold formula. We speak the phrases of the Twentieth Century; but cherish in our hearts the fears, the hates, and the passions of Medievalism.

Sooner or later, it will be realized that there exists in the universe a law of retributive justice, akin to, and as inexorable as, the law of compensation. For thousands of years mankind has been fluctuating between the extremes of individual selfishness and race selfishness. It is only a short step from Emerson's philosophy of Self-Reliance to the arrogant Superman theory of Nietzsche. The individual must be taught that what is best for the community is best for himself; and races must learn that what is best for mankind is best for every race in common. In this lies the hope of the world.

INTRODUCTION

A FEW words as to the form in which this work is presented, would seem to be appropriate. Though in the nature of an epic in conception and scope, its movement is inherently dramatic. Its theme is the creation, the culmination and disintegration of the material universe. The primitive simplicity of the plot and the vastness of its range seemed to call for a revival of the simpler methods of the ancient Greek drama. For this reason, the chorus has been introduced as it existed prior to the time of Æschylus. Thus the skeptic narrates his experience and the chorus makes appropriate observations from time to time expressive of the feelings which the stage pictures presented might arouse in an intelligent audience.

According to Eschenburg, "the chorus is charged with the exposition of the fable" (plot), "it praised the Gods and justified them against the complaints of the suffering and unhappy; it sought to soothe the excited passions and to impart lessons of wisdom and experience, and in general to suggest useful practical reflections." The chorus is a convenient medium by which to express the author's opinions. As Professor Gilbert Murray says, in the introduction to his translation of Euripides (p. lviii, Vol. III, The Athenian Drama), the chorus "is a method wonderfully contrived for expressing those vaguer faiths and

aspirations which a man feels haunting him, and calling to him, but which he cannot state in plain language or uphold with a full acceptance of responsibility."

In the performance of a modern drama, in which so much depends upon the scenery and action, there is no need for a chorus; but in the following poem it will be obvious that the expedient of resorting to the chorus is required by the nature of the drama and of the observations which could not properly come from its sole actor. Under the law of the Grecian drama, the chorus was not permitted to leave the orchestra throughout the course of the drama. This called forth the following caustic comment from Sir Walter Scott, in his essay on the Drama: "when a deed of violence was to be acted, the helpless chorus, instead of interfering to prevent the atrocity, to which the perpetrator had made them privy, could only, by the rules of the theater, exhaust their sorrow and surprise in dithyrambics."

Scott was not the first to find fault with the chorus. Aristophanes puts into the mouth of Euripides the following comment upon the chorus of Æschylus and Phrynichus:

> . . . "And on the chorus spluttered
> Through long song-systems, four on end,
> the actors mute as fishes."

The chorus was retained in the early English drama; but was used chiefly for the declamation of the Prologue or Epilogue. In Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, the chorus participates in the dialogue. It announces the entrance

of the actors and fulfils all of the functions of the early Greek drama.

In answer to the possible objection that the want of action might militate against the use of the dramatic form in the following poem, it may be observed that the *Persians* of Æschylus is practically a narrative. Attossa asks for news of Xerxes. The messenger complies, describing the Battle of Salamis. The chorus intervenes with running comment. The ghost of Darius is introduced; pats himself on the back, and condemns Xerxes. The latter enters and bemoans his fate. The chorus concludes with Strophe and Anti-Strophe and the drama closes with a procession in which actors and chorus march out wailing and rending their robes. Not a change in scene; not a single action.

PROLOGUE

SCENE I

BIRTH OF THE UNIVERSE

Utter Darkness

CHORUS

Now Chaos comes, who rules the potent realms,
Where Night and Death eternal vigil keep.
From out his bosom all that lives shall spring;
Into his bosom all that dies shall sink.
In yonder depths, long, long before Time was,
The primal elements all dormant lay—
Profoundly resting in pre-natal sleep.
Throughout the formless cavernous abyss,[1]
The infinite bounds were silent, dark, and still;

(*Distant rumbling is heard*)

Now hark! a murmur echoes from afar,
A stir of life pervades the stagnant void.
Anon a movement starts within the deep,
And rolling thunder rises from the depths—
The Elements in violent birth awake;[2]
Lights flash and joyous sounds reverberate.

Partial Illumination

(*Disclosing three castles above the clouds. Lower stage still dark*)

[1] See note on Nebular Hypothesis, p. 17.

[2] Referring to the chemical elements (eighty in number) out of which all forms of matter are constituted.

CENTRE. Castle of Hydrogen
RIGHT. Castle of Oxygen
LEFT. Castle of Nitrogen

Gates of the Castle of Oxygen open and two sturdy youths with wings appear dressed in armor.

One flies toward the Castle of Hydrogen. Throws a spear against the gates which fly open and two beautiful girls with wings flutter out.

The other throws a spear against the gates of Nitrogen Castle, which open also, and there appears a young girl with wings, dressed in white, flying slowly.

(*Full illumination*)

ENTER, in wild confusion, *Elements* represented by young men and women with shouts of joy.

(*Music appropriate*)

Execute dance in pantomime.

CHORUS

Behold the birth of Love and Hate,
As ancient sages taught,[3]
While some repel, 'tis others' fate
To be by Cupid caught.

[3] Empedocles and the Greek School of Philosophers which followed his guidance, taught that the elements of nature were brought into combination and separated from each other by the powers of Love and Hate, and that from the influence of these forces all things were created.

A vagrant beau called Oxygen,[4]
Impulsive strong and gay,
Assails the Court of Hydrogen;[5]
But soon is brought to bay.

He's smitten by its daughters fair
And two he takes to wife—
The fiery damsels of the void
Whose destiny is strife.

Mid din and crash and rumbling roar
And flashing, flickering lights,
And laughter from the Titan host
And countless scores of sprites—

[4] Oxygen, named by Lavoisier, first separated and identified by Dr. Priestley. The chief constituent of water, in the formation of which, in combination with Hydrogen, it is approximately eight-ninths by weight. In combination with Nitrogen, in the ratio of one to five, it forms the air. It is the great supporter of combustion and animal life. It is the most versatile of the elements, and is not only the basic element of air and water but enters largely into the formation of all solid substances, even being approximately one-half by weight of the rocks composing the earth's substance.

[5] Hydrogen is the lightest of the elements and, perhaps, the most inflammable. Upon its discovery by Cavendish, he called it "inflammable air." The spectroscope reveals its presence in the Sun. It is one of the paradoxes of nature that this light inflammable gaseous element upon being chemically combined with Oxygen should form water, the eternal foe of fire.

Amidst the roar of Elements,
The nuptials are a lark;
They honeymoon in a crystal sphere
Afloat on a crystal barque.

(Loud explosion and sound of rushing waters. From the center of the group of Elements appears a large crystal globe in which the groom and his two mates stand with hands joined.)

A brother of the sturdy groom
Pays court to a damsel rare.
Dame Nitrogen is fair but cold;[6]
Their union forms the air.

Then other Elements unite
According to affinity;
The partners join and dance in glee,
And so on to infinity.

[6] Nitrogen forms nearly eighty per cent. by volume, and seventy-seven per cent. by weight of the atmosphere. Nitrogen and Oxygen have only the feeblest attraction for each other. Their mixture to form the air is not a chemical combination. The chief attribute of Nitrogen is to deprive all the elements, with which it combines, of the power of combining with Oxygen—that is, of undergoing combustion. It may be said, therefore, to be a damper upon affection or affinity. Yet it is indispensable to vegetation. Without it the world would be barren.

In spirals, circles, in and out,
From chaos order settles,
To outer realms the lighter float
Now in the centre, metals.[7]

And thus are formed the stars and suns
And satellites attending,
Which now bedeck the universe,
Illumination lending.

Scene darkens. Discloses the sky at night with stars and planets brightly shining. Meteors and comets flash across the sky. Mists and clouds—The sun rises.

CHORUS

Hail! mighty Sun! to earth the King of Kings,
Of all the suns the firmament upholds!
About thy throne thy satellites attend,
In solemn grandeur since their fiery birth
Long years ago when all was nebulous.
Thy potent rays have stirred the Elements
To huge and infinite reactions and
To Titan conflicts through long Geologic days.
Thy forces set the earth and air apart
And made the waters take their wonted course;
With verdure clad the inhospitable mass;
Prepared the globe for divers forms of life.

[7] See note on Nebular Hypothesis, p. 17.

Thou wert beholder of the birth of man
And mothered then his infant helplessness.
To thee in gratitude he raised his head
In prayer, and decked his altars with thy fire.[8]
Thou hast beheld the world from chaos rise
And into chaos wilt thou see it fall.

SCENE II

THE ETERNAL QUESTION

A balcony overlooking the Hudson River. The Palisades in the distance.

SKEPTIC

You ask me how I know that death's the end
And that 'Hereafter' is an idle myth—
Because I've had the experience of sleep,
Which is the living prototype of death.
For if we gain release from pain and woe
By grateful slumber's dead unconsciousness,
Why not the more should death's eternal sleep
Give final surcease to our mortal toil;
Extinguish mind, aye, soul—if such there be—
Annihilate the future with the past?

[8] Primitive man in all ages has had a singular respect for the sun as the source of heat and light. The worship of the sun as a deity was common and temples were erected in his honor. The stone ruins at Stonehenge are now believed to have marked a temple to the sun erected about 1680 B. C.

FRIEND

Aye, you have slept, but have you never dreamt?
Are dreams no hint of that mysterious state—
Vague interregnum when the heartbeats cease?
If we're to hold by that criterion,
Which is but part of living man's economy,
And say, because a sleep may be profound,
Without suggestion of a mental act,
That therefore death is one eternal blank;
Then we might claim with equal show of right,
That as our sleep is often wrought with dreams,
The sleep of death may also have its form
Of consciousness. And as the mind oft acts
Without the body's aid, so may the soul.

SKEPTIC

Ah! soul is mind and mind is not a thing,
But consequence of Matter's interaction;
For Matter rules—all else is inconceivable.

FRIEND

But why, I ask, why risk your future fate
By snap decisions on so deep a question?
Accept—at least do not deny the force
Of intuition's sense, a sixth sense, if you please;

The sense at which the great agnostic hints.[9]
As all mankind, in every age and clime,
Has had some vague conception of the soul,
Why not accord some basis to this faith
Of deeper import than mere whim of man?

SKEPTIC

This talk of soul is trite and patience tries.
For taking things on faith, I have no taste.

FRIEND

It is not faith, but that subconscious sense
That most men feel but cannot analyze;
For certain intuitions of mankind
Lie deeper than the vulgar mind can probe.

SKEPTIC

Let sciolists and faddists have their way
In building doubts from creeds or creeds from doubts.

FRIEND

I only urge the normal mind should take
An attitude of sane receptiveness.
It's well observed that those who rail the most

[9]The great agnostic—Herbert Spencer. But he was not alone in his deference to the fundamental intuitions of mankind. Euripides wrote:

"The simple nameless herd of humanity
Hath deeds and faith that are truth enough for me."

At other's faith are oft the blindest slaves,
Themselves, of faith in some new-fangled cult—
And brains and culture seem to be no bar
To this inherent weakness of the vain;
For all that's sought, it seems, is novelty,
Or anything that marks them from the crowd.
Another class are those half read, half trained,
Who delve in mysteries beyond their ken
And take for granted things that suit their whim,
Or help uphold the folly they maintain.

SKEPTIC

What things for granted does the Atheist take?
You know his cult is absolute denial.

FRIEND

No, no, my friend, although he cannot solve
The simplest problem out of Euclid's book,
He quotes the distances of every star
With firm conviction, e'en their size and weight,
And prates of things his mind could never grasp;
Now what, pray tell me, what is this but faith?
But I perceive you weary of the theme
Your drowsy lids but mock my argument—
I'll say good-by and wish you pleasant dreams.

(*Exit, Friend*)

SKEPTIC, in reverie. (*Scene darkens.*)

ACT I

TO-DAY

SCENE. Overlooking the Hudson River. Sunset beyond the Palisades.

ARGUMENT. The theme outlined. Sunset described in the purlieus of a great city. Reflections on the advancement of the age in things material. The failure of civilization to keep pace with the strides of Science and Art. The passions of men are the same in every age. The grandeur of the firmament and the insignificance of man.

CHORUS

Our theme is man's achievements and his end:
The universe—its grandeur and decay.
The art of man has weighed the distant stars;
Deduced their orbits, distances and speed;
Divined some inkling of their origin.
His skill has wrung her secrets from the Earth:
Sounded her seas, explored their depths and scaled
Her mountains; wormed himself into her bowels;
Surveyed her strata, timed their place and age
And made Creation comprehensible.
But knowledge ends at that mysterious gate

"The western bank of Hudson's mighty stream."

Called Death. To that dread portal vistas clear
Confront his vision—out beyond there lie
The impenetrable shadows of Eternity.

SKEPTIC (*in reverie*)

The orb of day in gorgeous splendor sinks
Beyond the Palisades that grimly guard
The western bank of Hudson's mighty stream;
And to mine ear there comes the hum of life,
The murmur of the city's daily toil,
Which fainter grows as traffic ebbs away:
A distant drone in deep dull monotone,
Soft crooning in the vibrant summer air;
Now chiming into cadence with the trees
As gentle zephyrs stir their dark green depths
And rouse the leaves to rustling sibilance.
Now, hark! the trill of birds the chorus joins
As fluttering nestward their melodious notes
Swell Nature's greeting to the reign of Night.

CHORUS

Great steamers cleave the waters with their prows
And hurl the billows surging on the shores.
While flashing in the sunset glow, the sails
Of flitting yachts, like moths before a flame,
Reflect the radiant glory of the sky.
Anon is heard the clanking clash of steel;

Huge red-eyed monsters, hissing steam and smoke,
Resistless come with rush and rumbling roar,
Like flying serpents loom into the view
And pass into the twilight—bearing on
Their various burdens to their different marts.

SKEPTIC

Methinks how great the age in which we live;
How great to join this mighty continent,
Its every part, with ringing ribs of steel
And make the journey to Pacific's coast
But three short days, which would in former times
Have taken weary months. And then to send
The human voice a thousand miles or more
Through wires charged by lightning from the skies.
And that deed done to send the message then
Unaided through the ether that we breathe;
To store by art on cylinders of wax,
Or rubber discs of more enduring form,
For future times to hear, the human voice
And music's noble and enchanting strain;
Create with ev'ry pleasing sound and note
Of well-appointed modern orchestra,
A symphony from work-day dynamos;
Explore the source and mystery of light
And vibratory waves of mortal sense unfelt;
To penetrate by Roentgen rays and see
Through substances the human eye cannot;

Unloose the atoms from their wonted place—
Weigh, count and clarify their deep intent;
And by the spectroscope disclose the state,
The speed and elements of distant stars.
Of its achievements surely Progress can
Must justly boast, save in the state of man.

CHORUS

While science, art, and manual skill improve,
No sage has found the formula to change
The primal moral weakness of the race.
And those defects of character and heart,
That men were taught in ancient times to shun,
Are still the rocks that wreck his happiness.

SKEPTIC

For man remains unchanged throughout the years;
The same, in love, in hate, in war and peace—
The just, unjust, are quite the same to-day,
As when the dawn of History began.[10]

CHORUS

Beneath the thin veneer and polish of the times,
There lie concealed the passions of the cave.

[10] Well expressed in Kipling's 'General Summary':

"We are very slightly changed
From the semi-apes who ranged
India's prehistoric clay."

But customs change—the crimson wrath of old
Has been refined to cold and subtle arts.
The body is no longer lashed—but, ah!
What thorns into tender heart are driven!
The basic thought that drove the primitive man
To reeking altars with his sacrifice,
Is that which raised the penal stake and cross,
The torture chamber, wheel and pillory,
And underlies intolerance to-day!

SKEPTIC

Peruse again the page of History,
Take heed the fate of mighty nations past
That rose in ancient times, their zenith reached
In full development of every art,
Then sank in hopeless ruins on their plains.

CHORUS

The amethyst and turquoise of the sky,
The carmine glow and topaz hue are gone;
The sunset colors melt into a gray,
And one by one the orbs of night appear.

SKEPTIC

There Venus shines resplendent in the west;
Her narrow orbit does not let her stray
Far from the God of day. So when she comes,

As morning or as evening star, we know
Her charms are destined not too long to last;[11]
And even now she's sinking fast and soon
Will drop into the gloom. But Jupiter,
The steadfast friend of earth, whose orbit takes
Him thirty years to turn, shines steadily—
More like a beacon than celestial orb.
While Mars, our ruddy neighbor of the skies,
Provokes the dwellers of this earth to ask,
If those strange markings, single and in pairs,
That seem his world-like surface to indent,
Can be the work of human hands like ours.[12]
There Saturn with concentric rings appears
And shows to man the way that worlds are made. [13]

CHORUS

Now in the east the full round moon appears—
Earth's satellite that rules the surging tides—
Whose presence pales the mighty distant stars;
Its silvery rays lend beauty to the night,
And beam benignly on the land and sea.
Withal it is a whited sepulchre—

[11] The orbit of Venus being between that of the earth and the sun, the angle which she may subtend during her annual revolution is limited. Therefore she is never far above the horizon, either as an evening or as a morning star.

[12] The lines discovered by, and named after, the Italian astronomer, Giovanni Schiaparelli.

[13] See note on Nebular Hypothesis, p. 17.

Celestial portent of the fate of earth.
No atmosphere to soothe the solar wrath,
Its arid plains all parched and waterless;
Its sterile slopes and craters cavernous,
Reveal to man the way that worlds shall die.

SKEPTIC

Out in the deep blue vault of Heaven shine
Vast suns to which our sun is but a grain
Of sand; whose light it takes some thousand years
To reach our human eyes; and yet beyond[14]
The limits of the faintest stars revealed
By mighty telescopes there well may be,
In depths remote, still other stars, and Nebulæ,
The womb of suns and systems yet unborn.[15]

CHORUS

Alas, how insignificant is man—
An atom by the infinite o'erwhelmed!
How wide, how deep the universe; how grand,
Magnificent the scale on which it's planned!

[14] Astronomers estimate that there are approximately one billion stars within the range of human vision through the instrumentality of the modern telescope. All of these stars are suns like the great orb which gives us day and night. But our sun is a mere pygmy compared to the stupendous bodies visible to us at night as twinkling stars in the heavens. The distances of

these stars stagger the imagination. To make the figures comprehensible, astronomers have adopted a new unit of measurement, namely, the distance which light traveling at the rate of 186,000 miles every second traverses in a year. This is called a "light-year." Distances up to one hundred light-years have been measured with gratifying accuracy. Probably half of the stars visible to the naked eye are more than four hundred light-years distant; while as to the telescopic stars up to the tenth magnitude the majority are probably over one thousand light-years from us. In the plane of the Milky Way, the stars probably extend in all directions to a distance of from eight to ten thousand light-years. At right angles to the plane of the Milky Way the stars seem to thin out considerably at five hundred light-years and none have been measured more than sixteen thousand light-years from the central plane. Our stellar system is probably a vast flattened aggregation of stars about fifteen thousand light-years in diameter and from two to three thousand light-years in thickness. The part most thickly set with stars appears to our view as the "Milky Way." The smaller Magellanic Nebula in the southern celestial sphere is said to be at a distance of thirty thousand light-years.

[15] The Nebular Hypothesis. The presence of those mysterious clusters in the heavens not only suggests, but, by their form, constitution and movement, gives apparent confirmation to the most plausible theory yet advanced for the evolution of the universe. Nebulæ have always been the subject of keen interest. At first they were assumed to be only clusters of stars; but the failure of the largest telescope to resolve them into separate bodies awakened the first doubt as to their constitution. Then came the revelations of the spectroscope which showed them to be, not clusters of remote minute stars, but chaotic aggregations of luminous matter showing clearly defined signs of spiral, elliptical and circular motion.

The Nebular Hypothesis had its inception successively and independently in the minds of Swedenborg, Kant and Laplace. Let us extend its application by indulging in a corollary which

the state of physical science in their day would not have justified:

Assume all of the primary elements lying dormant in the vast void of the universe. Without motion there can be no heat. In the intense cold of the great void the gaseous elements would be first liquefied, then solidified. (Oxygen, Nitrogen and Hydrogen have been solidified by man by ingenious processes.) The moment that the process of liquefaction or solidification set in the law of gravitation would instantly become a factor in their destiny. Centers of gravity form; attractions are generated and movement begins. With movement comes friction, heat, combustion and light. With heat the gaseous elements are dissolved from solid form into liquids or assume their gaseous state. The heaviest elements, singly or in combination, will form Nuclei toward which the others will gravitate. Affinities assert themselves and as the elements converge, cross or touch one another in the great maelstrom, chemical combinations are made and new substances take birth.

The converging masses assume spherical forms. As more and more aggregations of matter impinge on the embryo spheres, it would be a miracle if they were all evenly distributed. The slightest irregularity would change the balance and set up a rotary motion —a motion which the surrounding atmosphere and particles within the zone of gravitation would quite reasonably follow. When the central masses condensed sufficiently they would manifest themselves as stars or suns with vaporous masses about them extending to the limits of their range of attraction. As condensation proceeded the central masses would be detached and the vaporous envelopes would divide into rings—each ring the progenitor of a planetary system. We may imagine the same process to go on in the condensation of the planetary rings in the formation of satellites. Saturn with his rings stands out to-day as an example of world-making fortunately vouchsafed for our study and reflection. The density of Saturn is less than that of water. The planet is in its formative state. It will, no doubt,

pass through the same process as the earth—Oxygen and Hydrogen forming water; Oxygen and Nitrogen forming an atmosphere. The heavier matters contained in the surrounding envelope, attracted to the planet, will break through the atmosphere, impinge on the water, sink to the center and solidify in due course. The Nebulæ in Orion, Andromeda, Lyra and Canes Venatici are visible examples of how solar systems are evolved.

ACT II

TO-MORROW

ARGUMENT. The skeptic, in a dream, views as a spectator, apart from the world, its progress and decay through many ages. Beholds wars and internecine dissensions of the races. The improvidence of man and its punishment: sterility, plague and famine. Old age of the world.

CHORUS

Long ages seem to pass as in a dream.
Before us panoramic visions rise:
Of man, his life and growth, and future fate;
Of earth, its changes in the course of time.

SKEPTIC

I seem to drift in upper air serene
And view with vague delight the rolling sphere.
Before me lies a virgin plain untrod
Up sloping gently from the silver sea.
I gaze again—as if by magic's art—
There come the signs of life, the homes of men.
And these increase in number as I gaze,
Until the village has become a town;
The town, a city of enormous size.

CHORUS

The city's streets encroach on farm and field;
The wood, the dell, the babbling brook are gone,
And nature's beauties, by the vandal hand
Of highly wrought refinement, have been marred.
The iron rails of traffic span the earth;
The smoke and steam of factories obscure
The purple vault of Heaven with its stars;
Their chimneys quite o'ercap the churches' spires;

SKEPTIC

Throughout the streets and avenues appear
Inhabitants preoccupied with all
The joys and sorrows of their narrow lives.
And thus the world in every part becomes
The home of teeming millions of mankind.

CHORUS

But yet man seems, though skilled in every art,
To cling persistently to savage ways
And scorn the gentle voice of Charity and Peace;
For moral sense still keeps in infancy,
And foolish man has failed to grasp the thought:
That though his wealth should rival Croesus' dream,
And culture reach its apex in all arts;
Though science penetrate through every veil,
That keeps the unknown from his vision, yet,
If not applied to help his fellow-man,
The strides of knowledge and of art are vain.

SKEPTIC

Contending armies battle on the land,
And steel-clad navies on the ocean clash.
Upon their issue destiny appears
To hang the fate of all the trembling world.
Then greedy powers rob their prostrate foes;
Assign among themselves and loyal friends
Their so-called separate spheres of influence!
Thus nations rise and fall and maps are changed.

CHORUS

Grim war shall last while greed and hate endure; [16]
So long as locks and bolts our treasures guard,
Or watchmen pace the narrow dimlit street;
So long as oaths are taken in our courts
Or bonds demanded to secure just debts;

[16] Since this was written the greatest war in history has been fought and twelve million of the manhood of the world and countless numbers of its womanhood have fallen in battle or died in consequence of its accompanying horrors. By so much has the potentiality of the human race for future civilization been depleted and impaired. In so far as paganistic ideas may have been crushed and higher ideals stimulated in the human mind, let us hope that the world is better for the sacrifice. Yet, judging from the attitude of some of the nations at the peace table—their greed, their selfishness—there is little ground for hope that they have taken seriously to heart the true lesson of the war.

So long as vice impels the human heart
And self's the mainspring of a sordid world.
While kings for greed invoke the God of War
So long must nations stand upon their guard.
Against the curse of war there's one recourse—
The sword is yet its own best antidote.
Against injustice to resist is right—
When Might offends the only shield is Might!

SKEPTIC

Internal strife embitters every land;
The rich still richer grow, the poor more poor;
The tyranny of Capital bears down
Its yoke relentless on the toiler's neck—
An ill much greater than abuse of kings.
Injustice, Hate and Fear go hand in hand;
Domestic strife divides the husband, wife;
Their children often bitter foes of both;
The courts of law still gravely sit with pomp
In technical denial of equity;

CHORUS

And votes are brazen bought and brazen sold.
In every walk of life Corruption stalks
With smiling face to coax the weakling man—
Her right hand holds the shining cursed gold;

But in its midst is hid the canker worm of death
And all who touch it fester at the heart—
Both they and their posterity are curst.

SKEPTIC

Vast steamers swarm in every gulf and bay
And streak the greater oceans with their foam.
While in the air audacious man in glee
Has shamed the feathered couriers of the sky.

CHORUS

The ten commandments, which on Zion's Mount
To Moses, prophet of the Jews, were given,
Are idly mouthed or calmly laughed to scorn—
The symbols of a better age o'erthrown
And pagan idols in their places raised—
Upon all sides decadence swiftly spreads.

By paradox unique an attribute,
Most worthy and sublime—the love of Him,
The great first cause, the Father of Mankind,
Has been transformed to anger, hate and fear.
A thousand creeds divide the human race.
Each claims its own, the only road to bliss,
And vows all others doomed to Hell's Abyss.

SKEPTIC

The Christian creed in scores of warring sects
Is split in vain dissensions o'er mere texts
From the great book from which they all have sprung.
As though a God all merciful and just
Would spurn the longing of a single soul,
Sincerely striving to attain His love,
Obey His law and pay Him reverence.
Thus foolish man vies with his fellow-man,
To reach the goal of Heaven's Golden Gate
By wrangling on diverging paths of hate.

CHORUS

In earlier days there had been some respect
For virtue—heroes smiling gave their blood
For freedom and uplifting of the race;
But when the growth of luxury increased
And competition keener had become,
Both envious pride and selfish greed combined
To make men fight like soulless animals
For mere existence; then the good Samaritan
Was banished from their lives, and in his place
Were Hate and Fear and unfair Rivalry.

Despite its noble past it is a dying race;
For white and yellow, brown, red, black are one,
And all the divers tribes of each, which have,
Throughout long ages, warred with varying fate

In struggles for supremacy, are merged
Into a common stream of mediocrity—
The vices of the worst commingled with
The vices of the best; the virtues of
The best dragged down to one dead average.
And in their selfish aims, their lust, their greed,
They quite forget there comes a day of reckoning.

SKEPTIC

The fertile land, that once so fairly bloomed
With every blessing of the field and vine,
Is desolate, and deserts mark the site
Of splendid cities, populous and great.

CHORUS

The forest shade that dulled the sun's fierce ray
And tempered winds that blew from ice-chilled lands;
Whose gnarled and tangled roots upheld the soil
And stayed the angry rivers' ruthless flood;
Whose verdure drew the welcome rain and made
The earth to smile in beauty and abundance;
Ungrateful man, unmindful of the past,
Has burned in wilful waste, or hewed for greed
To fill the gaping jaws of Industry.[17]

[17] There is no doubt that the beginning of the downfall of many ancient lands may be directly traced to their disregard of forest preservation. To-day the making of paper from wood

Oh, Man improvident! insensible that Fate
Condemns the least infraction of the Law,
That Wisdom throughout nature hath ordained,
And for each trespass, soon or late, exacts,
Without a qualm, her meed of punishment—
Ye have lacked in every age the foresight to preserve
The source from which your greatest gifts have come,
And now behold your cherished cities meet,
With all their art, their learning, and their wealth,
The doom of Ninevah and Babylon!

Now plague and famine show their heads abhorred
And sweep their countless millions off the earth.
In vain the farmer tills the sterile soil;
The roots are withered e'er the shoots have grown—
The soil is barren for the world is old.

pulp and the greed of industry in cutting down our forests endangers the future of man and requires that immediate steps be taken co-operatively by all the nations of the world to put into practice the wise precaution that for every tree cut down another should be planted.

ACT III

THE END OF MAN

ARGUMENT. The skeptic, having witnessed the culmination, now beholds the running down of progress—The gradual depopulation of the Earth. General desolation. The ruins of great cities described. The death of the last man. Observations on the futility of human achievements and ambitions.

SKEPTIC

The sun now shines with fainter light than when
In earlier days it stirred a fertile globe
With myriad forms of palpitating life;
His feeble rays of reddish orange hue
Diffuse on earth a hazy twilight glow.

CHORUS

The panorama now appears reversed—
Instead of life, activity and growth,
That in the former pictures were so marked,
There seems to be a running down, as when
A clock exhausted slowly tolls the hour.
The icy caps that decked the poles

"The steel-framed structures that once pierced the sky."

With narrow margins, toward Equator creep,
In snow-white, fate-like, rings of death;[18]

SKEPTIC

The towns and cities that once spread the plains
Seem palpably to shrink before my view—
Their buildings gently crumble into earth.

CHORUS

The steel-framed structures that once pierced the sky,
And were the marvel of man's handiwork,
Have tottered to their doom reluctantly.
The brick and stone that cased their skeletons
Have sunk into the dust about their base;
While pier and girder web-like naked stand
Sad relics of man's bootless industry.
And when the earth revolves its back upon
The fading sun, and twilight's feeble glow
Has changed to inky night, the twinkling stars
Gleam mockingly between the iron tracery.

[18] This refers to the return of the glacial period, which will probably be the precurser of the end of the world as a place of habitation. The next recurrence, ending the present geologic stage, may not, and most probably will not, end the world's life history. The finding of extensive coal-beds within the Arctic and Antarctic circles indicates a prolific vegetation in those regions which may be accounted for by the variation in the inclination of the earth's axis to the plane of the ecliptic during the course of the revolution of our solar system through the great nebula of which our solar system forms a part.

SKEPTIC

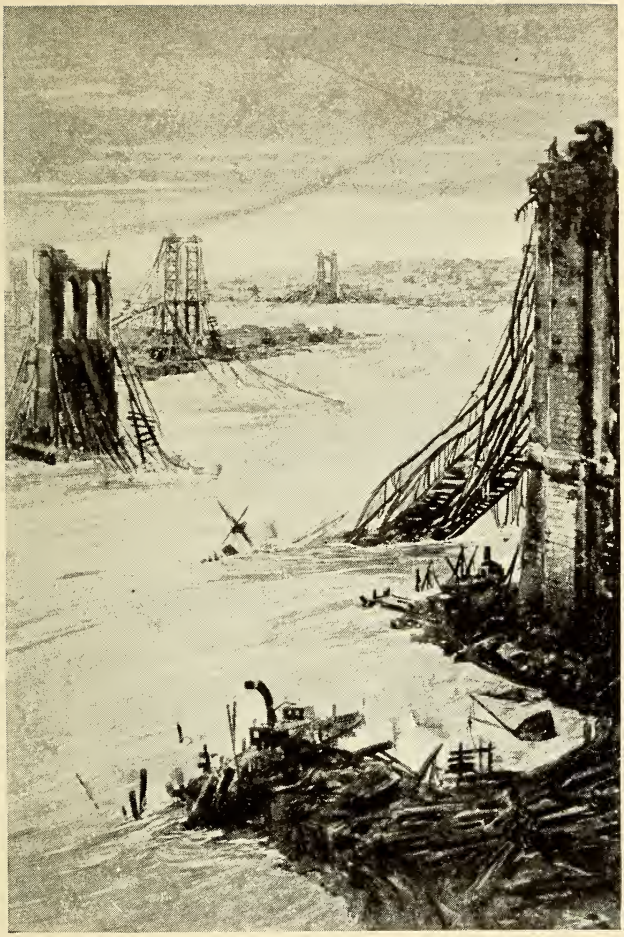
Great bridges that once spanned the rivers' tide—
Colossus-like in towering majesty
Of stone and steel—erected with a skill
That taxed the ingenuity of man;
Beneath whose interlacing members passed
The tallest masts of ships that sailed the seas;
Now fallen and dismembered choke the course
Through which the tumbling waters roar, and wake
Resounding murmurs from the death-like shores.

CHORUS

Where once the streets and avenues have rung
With human steps and traffic's noisy strain;
With sounds of joy or mortal agony;
A strange dread silence now pervades the scene.
Anon the sparse inhabitants emerge
From out their shelter in some ruined shrine
And totter feebly, aimlessly about;
Their footsteps echo in once busy streets
Like heart beats in a dismal sepulchre.

SKEPTIC

My vision now seems limited to grow;
Instead of broad expanse of land and sea,
Diversified by mountain, vale and bay,
I see a parching plain with many stones
Of various shapes in great disorder strewn—



"Great bridges that once spanned the river's tide."

The ruins of some old metropolis.
Unburied bodies lie in heaps around
And bones of mortals bleaching on the sand.
There is no sign of life save in one place,
That seems the cellar of some ancient edifice.

CHORUS

Behold, within is spread a rough skin rug
And on it lies a man in writhing agony.
His breath comes fast and restless move his arms;
Anon he plaintive calls a woman's name—[19]
Now all is still!

SKEPTIC

But, look! there seems to rise
A mist-like thing or shape of shadowy form;
But yet of beauty undefinable;
Mysterious, weird, and awe-inspiring:
And, as it hovers for a moment by
The body whence it seems to emanate,
The air is filled with perfume of sweet flowers.
Dread premonitions fill my tortured mind—
I dare not question what it all can mean.

CHORUS

It means the end of man and end of earth!

[19] Woman—the strongest and most enduring tie that binds man to earth.

SKEPTIC

Thus dies the race that aimed to pierce the veil
Of things eternal and of things unknown!
Yes, this the race perfection hoped to reach
In youthful dreams of the millennium.

CHORUS

What counts ambition now, or miser's greed—
What recks the toil by which their ends were reached?
The power and pelf of all the world shall fade!
Where is the gain when all must pass away?

SKEPTIC

A library far-famed in all the land,
Upon a hill in stately ruin stands;
Resisting time and dissolution's force
With utmost strength of massive masonry.
A fungus growth half cloaks the crumbling walls—
Kind nature's aid to hide the scars of time.
The columns of the grand façade
Uphold no more the shattered pediment;
The dome and roof have fallen to decay,
And block the aisles and corridors in which
The learning of long ages has been stored.
Books! books! aisle after aisle and tier on tier—
Unread, unopened, thick with dust of years!

"A library far-famed in all the land."

I gaze in sadness, while upon me creeps,
A shade of awe, unspeakable regret,
That here man's wisdom has its limit reached!
That here the fame of sage and poet ends—
Between the covers of these musty tomes!
What toil and mental energy were spent!
What pains, discouragements, ambitions wrecked,
While their poor authors strove for name and fame!

CHORUS

A fame, alas, not more enduring now
Than that of those who lived without a thought
Of present or of future praise or blame.
Oh, Fame! thou art a futile bubble blown,
The toy of fate, the idol of great minds!

SKEPTIC

The hall wherein the Legislature sat
(Vicarious symbol of a pygmy race),
Pretentious capitol that was, is now
No more. The ornate arch and sculptured vault,
The columns, stairs, the rail and balustrade
All richly wrought, lie broken and awry;
And midst the crumbling statues of the great
The screech owl sits in solemn irony.

CHORUS

Here orators descanted on the times
And tried to turn the course of nature back,
In vain attempts to make man good by rule
Until all sense of human liberty was lost;
Oblivious that by nature's higher law
It is ordained that those who fall to vice,
A prey to their own weakness, are not meant
To flourish or perpetuate the race.
Forgetting this their vain effeminate laws
Destroyed all strength of will, all exercise
Of moral force and quelled initiative—
Pampered, humored, circumscribed as well—
And thus upraised a coddled race of weaklings.[20]

SKEPTIC

The high-domed Court where Justice sat enthroned,
Coerced to blush as her gold-burnished scales
Insidiously sank to either side,
And wished the bandage from her eyes withdrawn
To wield the sword her helpless hand engrasped;

[20] You cannot legislate into the human heart the ten commandments. They were written on stone. Think of that! You cannot make men good or sober or virtuous by law; but you may destroy the human will by law. If men cannot live cleanly nature sentences them to death. If nations do not live uprightly they too must die.

Where lawyers quibbled, litigants forswore
And truth discouraged trembled at the door.
The shrine wherein the preacher marked the way,
That man should go to win eternal life—
The narrow way which he himself hath sped—
Oblivious of all other ways than his,
Which might as likely lead to God's eternal throne;
The school of learning where the restless seer,
Tugged at the veil of the unknowable—
All, all are sunk in crumbling ruined heaps!

CHORUS

In yonder field where once the willows grew,
Were serried ranks of humble soldier dead—
The graves of those whose only claim to fame
Was that they fought the battles of their land.
Above each grassy mound a modest slab
But briefly told their date of birth and death,
Their name, their Company and Regiment.
O'ershadowing these were huge majestic shafts,
With graven records of more glorious deeds—
As if 'twere nobler to give up one's life,
In epaulets on horseback than on foot.
The pride of birth and arrogance of place
Are here reduced, in last analysis,
To common clay from which they all have sprung.

SKEPTIC

Of what avail are monuments high reared
Above insensate clay; how vain the hope,
That lingers in the breast of man, to keep,
By crumbling stone and fading epitaph,
Posterity apprised of mortal fame,
That dies with the last man to read the tale.

CHORUS

The marble mausoleum of the rich;
The lofty shaft above the warrior's bones,
No higher stand nor more conspicuous
Than humble slab that marks the plowman's grave!
And show—strange irony of human fate—
The vanity of worldly ostentation,
When none are left to profit by the lesson.

"The crumbling world is vitrified and bare."

ACT IV

DISINTEGRATION

ARGUMENT. The skeptic beholds a world vitrified and bare—no sign of vegetation or water. The seas have dried up. Suddenly the whole earth crumbles before his gaze. Is overwhelmed with horror at his isolation. The sun gradually fades and disappears. He now becomes conscious that he is without material form. Drifts through the universe. The end of gravitation and of nature's laws. The reign of Disintegration begins. The gradual disappearance of the stars. Hears the thunders and beholds the myriad scintillations of their final disintegration.

CHORUS

Now turn your glance upon a purpled sky,
Bedecked with constellations, and behold
The solemn sweep of systems through the universe.
Red comets flash on their erratic course
Past stars that faithful keep their orbits' path— [21]
The shining milestones of Eternity.

[21] With respect to the earth and the solar system, the stars have no orbit. With respect to us pygmies in the vast universe, they are fixed and immovable. Yet they are doubtless pursuing

SKEPTIC

The desert world shines with a pallid light;
There is no sign of verdure on the plains;
The streams are dried, the forests all are gone;
The seas no longer lap the sloping shores;
The foaming cataracts at last are still—
No breath of life bestirs the livid waste.

CHORUS

The human race has passed and left no mark
Of its achievements, habitation there
Throughout the countless years; nor yet the trace
Of wondrous lower life, that was the spur
Of thought to man, is seen. The spider's web;
The hill of ants and labyrinths within;
The nests of birds intelligently wrought;
And all the marvels of the living world
Have long been swept into oblivion.

SKEPTIC

The crumbling world is vitrified and bare—
Lo! while I gaze, from some internal force,

their magnificent way in regular rotation—even as our sun and his satellites are moving onward upon their appointed path. Astronomers are generally agreed that there is a well-established movement of our solar system in the general direction of Vega, in the constellation of Lyra.

Its surface breaks into a thousand forms,
Which burst apart and scatter like a shell
Ejected from some huge artillery!
A flash of flame that marks the fateful blast,
A cloud of smoke that follows in its wake
Attract the eye a moment and dissolve.
The fragments spread throughout the cavernous void
And vanish like the dust before the wind!

CHORUS

A deep resounding crash abruptly breaks
In monstrous volume ripping through the void!
The ether trembles at the awful shock,
Then rolling onward rumbling into space
It sinks into a murmur and expires.

SKEPTIC

'Twas day a moment since, but now 'tis night.
Without the vanished Earth's reflected light,
A deep and solemn shade o'erspreads the scene.
I seem transfixed and poised within
The hollow of the great celestial sphere.
The glittering stars make radiant the depths—
Above, beneath, on every side they gleam
With cold and calm relentless brilliancy
And taunting mock my helpless isolation.

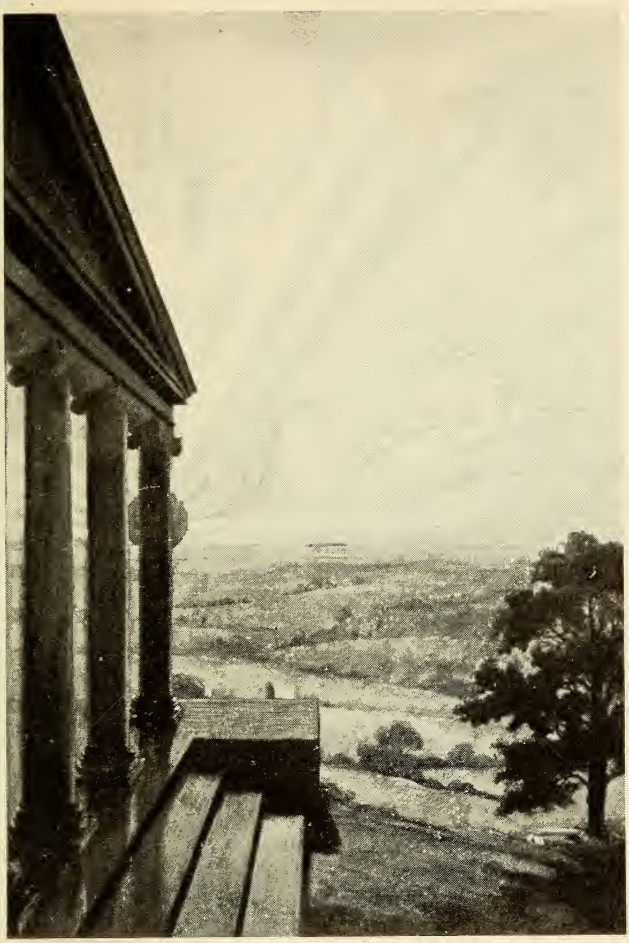
Disconsolate I gaze in poignant grief.
Up to this moment I have had some hope—
An undefined and subtle confidence,
That all these changing scenes were but a dream;
That soon or late I should return to earth.
But now when I perceive my refuge gone,
Without a thought or hope of other port,
A chill of horror overwhelms my heart—
Such horror as might fill the mind of some
Poor mariner marooned upon a rock
To die alone out on the boundless sea.

Like traveller returned from wandering,
Who halts afar to gaze upon the scene
Of boyhood's haunts and home he had so loved,
And finds no trace of those familiar signs,
His memory had cherished through the years;
So I gaze vainly, anxiously and long
Upon the void where once the world revolved.

The sun, which for some time, has grown more dim,
Now drowsily it drags athwart the sky,
With molten metal's deep expiring glow.
Upon me now there dawns the weird import
Of that dull disc in heaven's darkling vault.

CHORUS

Art thou the famed Aurora of the classic age,
Whose chariot swept the eastern sky at morn



"Art thou the famed Aurora of the classic age?"

And touched the clouds and mountain tops with fire?
Aye, this is the genial sun whose rising gleam,
Once waked the birds to sing their morning hymn;
Whose radiance hung the dew-clad trees with pearls,
And warmed again the fecund earth to life!
To this sad state has sunk the bounteous source
Whence flowed the vital force of many worlds!
Fainter and fainter grow the dying rays,
At last its outline softly, slowly blends
Upon the sullen background of the sky!
'Tis but a spot, a ghastly blur—'tis naught
But one dead cinder more in heaven's mighty deep!

SKEPTIC

Anon my meditation is disturbed
By consciousness of some o'ermastering force,
That bears me irresistibly away.
I feel the sense of inward struggle strong;
But seem to know to struggle were in vain.
Then comes the shock, the fearful consciousness,
That I am now without material form—
A spiritual speck aswirl in space;
An atom fluttering in the star beams!

Then like an arrow darting to its goal
Among the shining stars my path is shaped.
But, ah, how changed! the Pleiades have lost
Not one, but many orbs; Orion stands

Shorn of his belt and shining sword;
Rigel and Betelgeuse are fading fast.
The Little Bear and Polar Star whose ray
Has guided long poor mortals on their way;
Vega, Arcturus and Capella's glow,
That once did make night brilliant on old earth,
Have sunk into the shadow of the past.
The Sailors' Plow, Great Bear, and Southern Cross
And all the constellations I have loved,
Are crippled remnants of their former selves;
And that trite phrase philosophers have wrought
About the 'Eternal' stars is proved awry.

* * * * * *

From star to star in ceaseless round I reel
And at each circuit see some orb decay.
Yes, one by one the stars recede and die,
Or break in countless atoms on my view.

CHORUS

Disintegration now begins its reign
And nothing seems to hold its entity.
Cohesion and affinity that kept
The molecules and atoms in their place
And gave to matter its variety,
Its properties and attributes, are dead;
And in their place repulsion is the rule.
The basic elements are now unloosed,

Resolved into their primal form and fly
Precipitate to outer realms of space.
For gravitation's force has ceased to act
And marks the end of nature's cherished laws.

SKEPTIC

'Tis thus with matter, what now of the soul—
If such there is—shall it too pass away?
So I have thought, and still am doomed to think.
It were a shame indeed if those great minds,
Whose deeds advanced the welfare of the race;
Whose labors lent a halo to their age,
Should be resolved at last to nothingness.
Eternal justice wakes the pregnant thought,
Whate'er the fate of things material,
Oblivion shall not claim the human soul.

CHORUS

Now crash on crash alarms the silent void;
The infinite sphere is rent with shriek and roar—
No mortal ear could bear the awful din—
As thunders piled on thunders, far and near,
Reverberate and echo from the depths.
While lights fantastic gleam on every side;
From merest specks at first, they swelling grow
Like trembling rainbows, lace and interlace;
Break into myriad forms and scintillate,
Until the double arch of heaven's vault,
Vibrates and thrills with weird supernal light.

Then by degrees the violent glare abates;
The varied colors blend and slowly fade.
As when the summer's thunder-storm is past,
The fitful glow of lightning sweeps the sky;
So now the lightning's flash illumes the closing scene
And distant thunders mutter in the void—
Then all is dark and still.

"A peace-dispensing radiance filled the scene."

ACT V

THE SKEPTIC IN CHAOS

ARGUMENT. Cimmerian darkness realized. No light, no life, no sound. Awakening of the soul, rebellion. Ceaseless motion for long ages through the immeasurable depths of space. A spirit derelict. Agony and despair. A cry for mercy. Consciousness of other souls' existence.

CHORUS

Now has arrived the all-enduring night!
And in the broad expanse of universe
No friendly orb remains to guide the way.
Cimmerian darkness is at last conceived;
All light, all life, all sound has ceased—the universe
Is silent, still, throughout its infinite extent—
A silence deep and awful as eternity.

SKEPTIC

And I alone am left in the appalling shade—
The only conscious speck in all the void·
The only thing that keeps its entity;
The only living atom in the wreck of worlds.

Up to this moment I endure the pain
Of my abandonment with stoic zeal
And have not sought to question what I was,
Or what my destiny; for soon methought
This dream, infliction or whate'er it is,
Will doubtless end in everlasting sleep.

* * * * * *

I seem to thread eternal fastnesses—
Now falling from tremendous heights I sink
Into the dark, the silent dismal depths;
Again I rise in flights immeasurable.
I strive to rest but find no pillow but—
The yawning chasm of the frightful void
And sink again to depths unfathomable.
Now swirled in eddies of some hidden force,
To unknown realms by ruthless currents driven—
A human phantom doomed to endless life;
A spirit derelict in endless space.
Hark! strange sounds become articulate;
A solemn voice from out the darkness swells:—

CHORUS

Vain man, if thou'rt sufficient for thyself
And matter only is thy hope, let it be so,
Material is all thou'lt ever know!

SKEPTIC

At intervals strange shapes in myriads
Of varied hue, self-luminous, athwart
The darksome void incontinently sweep;
And as they pass I seem to hear the wail
Of human souls in dire agony.

Then comes the thought, indefinite and dull—
But whereat I rebel with conscious shame—
The wonderful reflection that the soul
As well as matter too may well survive;

CHORUS

For nothing dies—nor deed, nor word, nor thought
Although their memory perchance may fade—
Somewhere, sometime, 'though in some other sphere,
There comes from distant long-forgotten shore
A whisper rising to sweet melody,
Or murmur rumbling into dissonant
Deep thunder peal to punish or reward.

SKEPTIC

And now the consciousness of soul creeps in,
Commands my being and asserts itself:—

CHORUS

Matter resolved into its elements
Or decomposed into its primal state
To human eyes is imperceptible.
Great though the power of lens to magnify,
No eye has e'er discerned the atom's form;
Nor yet the shape of larger molecule;
Yet in a single atom you aver
Electrons swim that taunt your chemistry.[22]
What then, O man, is matter that you know
But visible forms of things you cannot see?
Ye who believe that matter has no end,
Why not extend your logic to the soul?
Must sense e'er be the test of man's belief?
Must he reject his intuition's guide
And ever with negation stifle hope?
Why drive it out from your Philosophy?
Who taught the infant chick to break its shell?
Who taught the busy ant its house to build?
Who taught the spider weave its wondrous web?
And last who taught your first forefathers bend
The head in worship of the unknown God?
He who ignores the spiritual side within

[22] Electrons. The theory is advanced that electrons are the basic constituents of matter—that even the Atom is not the last unit into which matter may be reduced; thus tending to confirm the Monistic theory of Haeckel. They are said to have a mass equal to 1–1700th of an atom of Hydrogen.

Is like the worm in egotist content,
Too satisfied within his cramped abode
To break the shell that keeps him from the world;
Not knowing that beyond the fragile wall
There is an outer and a greater life.

SKEPTIC

What sounds are these; which less in words than waves
Of thought home-pressing with compelling force,
Bore into my being and arouse strange fears?

CHORUS

A disembodied worm within the shell
Of prejudice upbuilt in former life.
Alas, the awful truth has dawned too late
There can be now no surcease from his fate.

SKEPTIC

My thoughts run back and mournful I recall
The skill and wisdom of an age long past;
An age that gained the mastery of matter;
That from the dead evolved new life and use,
And from the waste the workmen did reject,
Reformed and recreated other forms.
Might not that Providence, that's said to rule,
Perform with souls and immaterial things

What man has done with things material?
Recall the scattered ions from the void
And recreate anew the universe?
Endow again the indestructible soul
With other forms more beautiful incarnate—
So death and life shall constitute a chain
In endless cycles of e'erlasting good?

* * * * * *

CHORUS

Without the stars to mark the flight of time
He cannot tell the ages that have passed,
Nor yet conceive the ages still to pass
Ere he shall be released from his unhappy plight.

SKEPTIC

With all the boundless stretch of universe
At my disposal yet I seem to be
A prisoner fast locked to endless motion.

CHORUS

The dark, the dreadful silence of the void;
The cold, unfelt, but notwithstanding known;
The sense of misery wrought by consciousness
Of inability to rest or sleep;

The fearful lonesomeness of deprivation
Of human company, o'ermasters pride;
Weighs down his spirit and his tortured soul—

SKEPTIC

Oh, God have mercy! Hear my anguished cry!

CHORUS

Mark at the word the awful motion ends
Sweet music falls upon his famished ears
And to his eyes there comes the blessed light;
A peace dispensing radiance fills the scene.
And then there comes from out the weary ages,
The sound of voices; then the consciousness
Of other souls' existence—voices that
Salute with welcome and a cheerful hail:
Rest, rest at last in sweet eternal peace!

SKEPTIC (*awakens*)

Who spoke? Am I in Death's embrace or dreaming?
Give me some token, Lord, to wake my faculties!
The summer breeze across my fevered brow
Blows gently, and, before my wearied eyes,
The myriad stars, which Westward sink to rest,
Flash out their welcome from the deep blue vault.

The time perchance is near the Midnight hour;
The sailor's constellation and Great Bear
Have leaped a quarter circuit round the Polar Star.
Thank God, I live!—have not been dead for ages;
But, oh, more blest, the soul aroused within
Apprises me that I shall never die.

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